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Table 15: (APPENDIX III)

Functional Calendar of Seasons and Human Activities among the Highland-Plateau Amhara

Month: Abyssinian Calendar (Julian) in Amharic	Month: Equivalent in Western (Gregorian) Calendar	Climatic Seasons on Abyssinian High-Plateau	Annual Cycle of Amhara Ecological Activities (Economics, Agriculture, etc.)	Annual Cycle of Religious Seasons and Activities among Coptic-Abyssinian Amhara.	Cycle of Amhara Social Events	Syncretism	New, Ethiopian Civic Events on National Calendar
Mäskäräm 1	Sept. 11	receding flood after rainy season; yellow "mäsqäl" daisy carpets land; spring ("täsdaye").	place beehive basketwork in trees (swarming season); pasture is in flower; plowing new or fallow field for later cultivation, while soil is still fairly soft ("gaï").	17th Mäskäräm: Feast of the (true) Cross ("yäMäsqäl Bäal")- public rejoicing around bonfire (dämmära). Minor: 1st Mäskäräm is St. John's Day. 11th: "Arafa" - (Reunion of Adam and Eve)	Kin visiting when paths passable; children bring New Year flower bouquets ("enqutatash") on and after 1st (St. John's Day); and receive promise of new clothes for Mäsqäl.		"Mäsqäl" is now also a national holiday: Emperor appears at bonfire (Sept. 27th).
to	to						
Mäskäräm 30	Oct. 10						
Teqemt 1	Oct. 11	sunny growing & ripening season (ämmänä sega).	Remove honey from hive. Harvest first barley ("gebs"), thresh and winnow it for roasting or beer-making ("tälla"); sell honey to make mead ("Täj"); children guard harvest against birds and baboons.	12th Teqemt: St. Michael's Feast "Mikael"; services followed by picnics in countryside. Local: 5th: pilgrimage to "tebel" holy wells and waterfalls of Däbrä Mänfäs Qeddus (Abe).	outdoor games of children: boys make bullroarers ("gur-amemosh") to frighten birds away, shoot pebbles at baboons from slingshots. Girls dance rounds and greet storks arriving "from Jarusalem".		Annual commemoration of Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie, Nov 2nd. (Teqemt 23rd).
to	to						
Teqemt 30	Nov. 9						

[xlv]

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

602
539 "When kinfolk aid each other,
no trouble can sever them".

"The needle does not see her own hole
yet it serves her so well",

(said of a man, who, as is common, is generous to his brothers and sisters, yet stingy to his wife and even children).

"When the nose is hit,
the eye begins to weep",

(i.e when one relative is hurt, the others suffer with him).

602 Kin relations give the individual his greatest source of security, psychological and economic, to the Amhara mind, and protect him from the world outside. [574] Therefore, regular and frequent visiting of kinfolk is emphasized; it is one of the most frequent causes of absentiism of Amhara employees. Events of the life cycle (marriages, memorial feasts, etc.) require such visiting. The end of the rainy season is another stimulus. No other association seriously challenges the predominance of kin relations in Amhara society.

A. The Extended Family and Kinship Terms.

596 The extended patrilocal, patrilineal family usually inhabits its own hamlet, farms its own land, allocating it to its biological-nuclear families. Patriarchal elders form an informal council that can be convened in any case of need. This extended family is most typically found among owners of "rest" land

601 Cousins are simply addressed and referred to as "uncle's child" or "aunt's child", and there is no terminological difference between paternal and maternal uncles. But the informal terms mentioned above are extended to these consanguineal kinfolk for special emphasis of endearment, respect and protection. For the latter, the address "gashey" is used commonly, and a rarer, more poetic and somewhat archaic term of address would be "ambayé" (my mountain fortress).

Familiarities, teasing or endearing, in address to siblings include "abäba" (flower) for endearment to an older girl (sister); "anchi" (Thou, feminine) in teasing address of a girl to a younger, male sibling, otherwise considered an insult; "antä", (thou, male), in teasing address to a younger sister.

B. Affinal kin ("amachenät") and residence.

606 574 Affinal relatives, especially the male ego's parents-in-law, must also be visited regularly, at least once every two months in the dry season, or, if they reside too far away, at least twice a year. Gifts, (e.g. a fat sheep) must be brought, and hospitality and a feast can be expected in turn.

606 In popular Amhara opinion, the affinal villain is not so much the mother-in-law, as the step-mother-in-law. Both are addressed respectfully as "amatey" (lit. my elder mother). But it is believed that a mother, desiring her daughter to be happy in marriage, will

[601]

842 birth, or later by causing its joints to swell.

843 It is considered impossible for a woman to conceive while still breastfeeding a baby. This belief is so strong that no precautions are taken, coitus proceeds as usual after the first few months, and when a pregnancy does occur it is regarded as a freak of nature and misfortune.

841 These physical matters are more discussed by women than by men. Menstruation is differentiated in several ways: "tärakkäsä" - she has become impure; "räggäna" - the (monthly) curse is on her; "edef" - the discharge of menstruation; "bädäm nat" (lit. she is in blood). Husbands are expected to shun "the dirt" and avoid sex relations during that time.

843 As a pregnancy advances, women wrap a long cotton girdle around the belly and waist, "mädänät", for support, and continue this some time after childbirth.

843 574 844 About two months before a woman is about to give birth, ("arrus" - woman in advanced pregnancy), she often leaves her husband and goes to the hamlet of her parents'. There she knows she will be taken care of, fed, constantly attended, treated by the local experienced woman who acts as midwife, and not be expected to follow any of her housewifely duties such as fetching water, cooking, brewing beer, gathering fuel, etc. After birth she will usually remain at her parents' for some months, until her childbed, "aras" period (usually 80 days) is over. During this time, circumcision and clitorectomy are performed. For even good husbands are regarded as so habituated to the wifely services that they become impatient with the wife at this time.

304

585 Three-day visiting is the pattern in kin visiting, for it
● 57 usually takes one day for initial greetings and exchange of news, slaughtering and preparation of a sheep; a second day for feasting and talks with the neighbors; a third day for preparation of leave-taking.

After one week, the "dass" are torn down. A "great man" who is father of the bride, will usually send his daughter several donkeyloads of household staples, including lentils ("shuro"), peas cooked with salt, pepper, and spices, so that she will be honored and well treated by the women under whose jurisdiction she has come. Then, after a month, he will send a messenger to ask how she is habituated to the new life. If the reply is favorable, another load of grain, butter, spices, flaxseed oil are sent.

512 The adjustment of the bride may not be easy. The night she leaves her parental roof, she takes with her, besides her skin-mat, a little basket of dyed reeds, containing her personal little distaff, spindle, and glass necklace used in scouring pottery. After a week or a few weeks of honeymoon, she is expected to participate in the women's household tasks: fetching water and fuel, baking "enjära" daily for her husband, cooking "wot", to her husband's tastes, crushing barley, grinding "tyeff", brewing beer. If she complains too soon, the womenfolk will quote the proverb:

539 "Hardly arrived have you, young bride,
(but) already you crunch shembera (peas)"
(meaning: lazily pick at peas, instead of
doing the regular, harder work).

606 591 The couple is expected to remain in patrilocal residence at least a year, so that the bride can be taught, by her mother-in-law, how

c) Visiting

574 602 Visiting kinfolk regularly, during the nine months of the dry season, is a prime requirement. This includes, in this order of emphasis and frequency: patrilineal kin, matrilineal kin, affinal kin.

574 606 Visits to affinal kin are less frequent and more formal. When visiting one's parents-in-law, usually twice during the dry season, the man is not supposed to come empty-handed, but should bring a sheep as a gift. He waits outside the in-law hamlet, just beyond the thornbush enclosure, and asks the children whether his father-in-law is at home. When the latter appears, the visitor enters and approaches the hut. He enters only upon invitation. There is no mother-in-law avoidance as such, but contact is reduced to a minimum, between son-in-law and mother-in-law, to achieve maximum privacy for both.

602 Flouting kinship obligation is regarded as a shameful deviation, indicating an evil character. Kinship relations represent much security for the individual, but also involve him in serious obligations, such as aiding kinsmen in blood-feuds and reprisal-raids ("bäqäl"). A person who wanders away from the kin hamlet, or from kin obligations, when his mood or irresponsibility carry him, is called "läqo" (after the soft reed that grows rapidly at the least rain, but drops when grown to maturity).

574 754 Visitors, particularly strangers, must observe certain taboos, lest they be suspected of bringing the evil eye. They should not ask the number of children, nor praise their health or good looks aloud. This is considered dangerous, because the "buda" spirit is always on the lookout for fat, juicy children so that he can magically "drink their blood" and make them waste away. (Children are vulnerable to many communicable diseases).

164

574 576 When visiting the sick, the visitor, especially female visitors, are expected to express their sympathy in unmistakeable tones. The

574 visitors screw up their faces as if in great agony, even despair, and
576 utter the long, subdued wail "ayye". Religious expressions on such occasions are "ersiabher yatnawo" (May God give you health), or "egzer yemarewo" (May God be merciful to you).

574 d) Hospitality and Dining.
539 Hospitality to kinfolk, members of the secondary group, and other travellers, in that sequence of emphasis, is a major culture focus. Numerous proverbs are often quoted, governing this behavior:

Even a poor man is expected to give what he can, even if he can offer little more than a pleasant face:

"More than his food,
his face pleased me."

Refusal of hospitality for the night is castigated:

"He has let me be eaten by the hyena" (at night).

A stingy host, who could well afford generosity, is mocked:

"He goes about, attended by 90 retainers;
but in his house famine reigns".

A host is advised to make his invitation specific as to the day:

"A dog, called for the right day,
arrives on his own feet".

574 A host is expected to urge the guest to take freely of profferred
262 food and drink. An invitation to "take coffee" is frequently the formula introducing a complete dinner. Staples readily available, unlike dinners that require preparation, include barley beer ("tälla"), roasted barley grains ("gebs qolo"), roasted peas ("shembera qolo"), boiled corn grains ("mashella"), milk, eggs, limp bread ("enjära"), and except among the very poor, coffee beans, which are roasted, crushed and boiled in front of the guest.

Dinner is regarded as a feast ("dogges" or "gebber") and should include meat and butter, so that it is impolite to invite anyone on

574 262 Wednesday or Friday when no animal products can be consumed; the months of lent also interrupt the frequency of visiting.

To honor a "great man" ("telleq säw") the host presents him with a live sheep, select, with a heavy tail, then has it slaughtered and cooked in a spicy and peppery sauce ("wot"). In place of barley beer he will offer honeywater ("bers") or even honeymead ("täj"); the bread will be served smeared with spiced butter. A poor man, forced to substitute chicken for sheep, can at least indicate that he honors the guest by giving him the choice morsel - the wing: The proverb says:

[539]

"The chicken wing

joy brings to the face".

264 Etiquette in eating follows these procedures: The hands are washed prior to consuming bread or meat (though often with not very clean, muddy river water poured from a clay pot); and washed again after the meal to remove pepper stains of the "bärbäre wot" from the fingers, lest absentminded rubbing of the eye cause painful stinging. Only the right hand is used in eating, for the left is used in the toilet. The right hand is used to rip off a piece of the limp "enjära", dip it into the meat stew, close the piece of pancake-like bread around some morsel and fish it out for immediate consumption. A knife is used only when eating "brundo" (raw beef), at a special feast, to cut off a piece held between the teeth (now, at city feasts, brundo is served pre-sliced into cubes).

Noisy eating ("gorädddä") is permitted in the old tradition as indicative of he-man behavior, but smacking of lips and ceremonial belching, though not criticized, are not emphasized. It is an old custom of Amhara hosts, still followed in rural areas, to pour a mouthful of a profferred drink into their own cupped hands and consume it, before passing the cup to the honored guest or "great man" ("ejun däqno ätta"- lit. he received (cup) with hands (under-chin) and drank). This

264 procedure, also called "cämmäsä" is in imitation of procedure at the court of nobles, and it is known that kings have always had their special cupbearers ("cämash") who tasted the drink against possible poison, and who also removed any floating debris ("gäffäta") such as beeswax from the drink.

374 575 The hospitality group on non-kin members which meets most regularly, once a month, is the "mähabbär" association, already described. Based originally on religious private communion, each member plays host once a month to drink from "Mary's cup" ("yänaryas sewa"), to feast, for chant and dance ("zäffan") and less formal gossipy entertainment and conversation ("tächäwwäta").

C. Verbal Expression: Formalities; Wit; Pedagogic Riddles.

192 Emotional exclamations in everyday use are highly formalized:

Pain - "häyy häyy" (also if a painful truth "sinks in"; astonishment).

Fear - "wyy" (especially by women, just before a fearful event happens).

Fearful surprise - "ayyi" (e.g. when someone stumbles, or has an accident).

Alarm - "errii" - (cry of alarm; also of great sorrow as in death of kin).

Skeptical surprise - "errä" ("you don't say?!"); Reply: "mut" (abbreviated from "yemut", lit. "May (the emperor die) if this is not true").

Pleasure - "essäy" (to indicate comfort, e.g. when sitting down after having climbed a long, tiring hill).

576 514 192 Formal politeness in etiquette always considers the social status of the person addressed. Thus, there are six ways of informing an inquirer that the person he seeks has gone out to defecate or urinate:

Impolite, though not vulgar: "weha afässää" - (lit. he poured water).

Polite: "der wätta" - lit. he went to the bush).

Polite: "däj wätta" - (lit. he went out the door).

515 washing of the body and frequent washing of clothes, and an individual housewife who takes it upon herself to wash more than expected is noticed as different and suspected as possibly being not as respectable and innocent as she might like to appear.

388 In washing, especially of clothes, a soapwort ("endod") (pircunia abyssinica) is gathered from wild bushes the location of which is carefully remembered, for they are not planted. The yellow fruit is dried and crushed, on a flat rock above the river or in it when the water is shallow. It is mixed with water, so that a greenish-white foam results. The fingermarks, resulting from the mixing and gathering of the foam, can be seen on rocks where the sun has dried the remnant.

[574] Dry grass is used as toilet paper, usually held in the left hand.

515 Women fumigate their bodies frequently, in the dry season because
302 water is short and hard to come by; in the rainy season, after bathing in the brook or river, to "get rid of the river odor". For, especially at the beginning of the rainy season, the rivers are muddy and carry much smelly debris.

There are 3 different, major kinds of fumigation wood ("ätis enchät"): Domestic incense gathered in the woods by commoner women are "abalo" and "täjo" (Rhamnus straddo); noblewomen and wealthy women aiming at prestige despise domestic woods, and insist on imported incense, primarily "etan" (Frankincense), more expensive but freely purchasable on all markets because it is used regularly in the church, during services.

302 Plucking out of pubic hair, by means of ashes held between the fingers, was considered one of the most important duties of feminine hygiene. Men might shave, though not pluck, their pubic hair, if they desired to do so for special "cleanliness". This procedure of plucking

821 animals and evil spirits give birth. It is called "näber wäldaläch" (lit. the leopard has given birth), or "jeb wäldach", (lit. the hyena has had a litter).

823 Volcanic activity, which occurs not infrequently in these mountains that are of young geological age, is interpreted as a threatened repetition of the Biblical event that swallowed Sodom, and is indeed called "Sodom" (another connotation is "greedy").

Geographical directions are taken either from the Geez, e.g. "me'arab" for west (lit. where the sun sets), and "mesraq" for east; or the location of Abyssinian provinces is used: "Semyen" for north, "Azeb" for southwest. South is "däbub" (probably Cushitic).

821 Daytime and nighttime are regarded as two very different phases of the universe, altering radically behavior of natural phenomena, animals, plants, even human behavior. The phrase "the night belongs to the hyena" refers not only to the nightly roaming of that animal, but also to the roaming of evil spirits at night, as well as dangerous strangers and actual bandits. As a consequence, even the hospitable, outgoing householder of the daytime changes to sullen and suspicious behavior if strangers suddenly arrive after dark. When he must leave the hut, he carries a weapon, in the rural areas. Even in Addis Ababa, the official curfew at midnight is little resented by the average Amhara, because of this traditional pattern.

574 576 The period of a week is regarded as a time unit with regard to the primary group and kin visiting. When two members of these groups have not seen each other for more than a week, they greet each other with "endemen sänebätu" (lit. how did you spend the week away).

776 825 The world of the spirits, who also inhabit the universe in large numbers, is believed to be in close relationship with the animal

795 His social status compares to that of a "great man" (telleq säw),
756 but much of this is due to the fear in which he is held, because of his power over the supernatural world, in Amhara belief. There is fear that if someone were to offend him, he might use his powers to do evil - though black magic is not his usual metier. (The "love magic" of the däbtära has been described in relation to sex).

[539] "of insects, the worst is the scorpion;
of men, the worst is the däbtära".

[574] For the dabtara are unabashed in inviting themselves to feasts, weddings and any distribution of goods (e.g. parceling out of meat as soon as an ox has been slaughtered). In fact, they often act as if the host owed them an apology for not having sent an official invitation. Therefore, dabtara are usually invited to family feasts even if they are not kin.

795 The däbtära learns his craft through apprenticeship, beginning
756 when in the upper grades of church school. To achieve this, he
874 must be "attentam" (of unmixed Amhara or Tigre stock), have a good chanting voice and musical ear, be good in school, and find a däbtära-teacher willing to impart his knowledge to him. At this stage in church school he begins to be permitted to learn to write; and is not punished for doodling - forbidden at lower grades for fear a student might stumble on a formula and misuse a powerful spell.

795 There is even one priestly function which the däbtära occasionally
756 carries out. That is "re-baptism". He may re-baptize a patient vic-
[783] timized by ganyën, sometimes also cases of bùda, as part of exorcism.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

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574 middle upwards hairy like lions. We passed the mountain, and went to sleep at the foot of a village called Zalote. There will be about four or five leagues from this place to the monastery from which we set out. We halted by a running river of very good water, and when our baggage had been unloaded we went to the said village to see a very honourable gentleman, the headman of it—a very old man, who was lodged here very honourably. He gave us a very
[262] hospitable reception, giving us many fowls cooked in butter, and much mead, and he sent us a very large fat cow to the place of our halt. On the following day, which was Sunday, we went to say our mass at the church of the village, which is called St. Michael, a poor church, both the fabric and the ornaments. There are in this church three
793 married priests and three others, deacons,[1] that is to say, of
796 the gospel, and all are necessary, for no less can say mass. This honourable captain I met with later as a friar in the monastery of Bisan, and he left his condition and revenues to his sons, who were honourable persons; and I saw him stand at the gate outside, and he did not enter within the monastery, and there he received the communion with the novices, and when the offices of the church were ended he remained in honour with the provincial. On this Sunday we set out again in the afternoon, because the country
133 people who conducted us wished it so. Here we began to travel through flat country fallows and tillage, in the fashion of Portugal, and the bushes which are between the tilled lands are all wild olives, without other trees. We slept by some running streams, between many good villages.

[1] *Zagonaes.* Ethiopian corruption of *diakonos.*

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

the Angrab and Kahha, is the Mahometan town. These rivers inclose the town on its N. and S. sides, and join on the W. On the S. E. part of it is the church of Debra-berhan. On the N. E. is Kedus Gabriel. Two suburbs above Kedus Gabriel, is Anta Naggar, the hill, where, till Yasous's time, the Tigre, in consequence of a proclamation, were obliged to halt, and not allowed to enter Gondar. 361

In Abyssinia there remains not a shadow of the hospitality, which is said to be a trait in the character of barbarous nations. 574

They divide the day into five parts (humisi). From the twilight, which is here short, it is nagga; about nine it is called selest, or the third hour; mid-day is kutter; three o'clock, tessaat; and sun-set, serk. They judge by the height of the sun, having neither clocks nor watches. The other hours mentioned in their books are counted 1, 2, 3, &c. after dawn, sun-rise, or sun-set. 805

There are two kinds of monarchy; one is absolute, where there are no written laws, but the will of the prince carried into effect by his command and force; another is, where there are laws and restraints, but these occasionally broken through. The Abyssinian government is neither of those. There are no laws: the lives of the king's subjects and their lands are *de jure* his; he is absolute and sole master of their lives and property: Yet he has no military force; this is all in the hands of the governors of provinces, whose safety lies in keeping the prince in want of every thing. It is a monstrous kind of monarchy, and to this are owing the continual wars and rebellions. While the districts were small, these were prevented; but minorities, weak reigns, &c. have united them into great ones, each of which are more than a match for the sovereign; indeed, the forty-four nagareets of Tigre united are more than a match for all Abyssinia. Damot and Agow-midre, joined to Maitsha, when they please, starve the capital, and leave the king not only without army and provisions, but even meat and clothes for himself. The Turkish and Galla wars have accelerated this state of affairs. Each of the governments have become a kind of fiefs, very rarely not granted to the family of the deceased, and that one of it most likely to be serviceable. 642 631

[p. 53]

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

threw it down, cut steaks from it which they devoured rapidly, and then drove the cow on again, plastering up the wound with mud. The second (which is given with a wealth of detail too revolting to repeat) was at a regular banquet at which a live cow was brought in and strips cut from it by all the guests until the animal died, which took some time.

Salt states that Pearce actually saw an example of the first instance quoted above, which he says is by no means uncommon, but he disbelieves the second instance. No other writer that I am acquainted with recounts any such instance *of his own knowledge*, and the suggestion that such a practice ever existed is hotly denied in the country. Nor could I find any evidence of the existence of such a habit either as to the present or the past. Personally I am inclined to disbelieve the stories or to regard them as gross exaggerations, or possibly as isolated instances.

Be that as it may, the raw meat dietary, however, is undoubtedly very popular to-day, and it may be of interest if I give an extract from my diary describing a great *Gebur*, or banquet given at the Feast of Maskal, which we attended, and at which no fewer than 15,000 soldiers and 2000 or 3000 palace retainers were fed in four relays in the great hall. This is the more interesting in that for some years past Europeans have not been admitted to the *Gebur*, and although one was held on our last visit we were not present.

THE *GEBUR*

"We were received by the Court Chamberlain on the large stone terrace outside the *aderatch*, and after a

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

574 264 short interval led through rooms wrapped in darkness to the banqueting hall, at one end of which was a large raised platform shut in by closely drawn white curtains. Here, seated on a dais, was the Empress, surrounded by Abyssinian notables, and after paying our respects to Her Majesty, Ras Tafari, and others, we were conducted to the table prepared for Europeans on one side of the platform—there were about fifteen of us. At the opposite side of the platform the Ras and the principal chiefs sat down at another table, whilst in the middle green silk curtains were drawn round the Empress' dais, so that she should be hidden from the vulgar eye whilst eating; a constant stream of attendants bearing every conceivable kind of receptacle, from beautifully wrought gold dishes to enamelled iron mugs, passed in and out of her little tent.

"After we had had an excellent, if somewhat lengthy, meal, consisting of a mixed assortment of European and Abyssinian courses, the white curtains by which the platform was shut in were pulled back, shewing the hall packed with long low tables as closely as they could be got in, the tables being covered with slabs of Abyssinian bread enclosing quantities of cooked cut-up meat.

"To the sound of bugles and trumpets the main doors were opened and in poured the chiefs with their soldiery, who had come up to Addis Ababa for the feast from all over the country; the organization was admirable, and though some 5000 men filled the hall there was no sort of scrambling or disorder whatever.

"They set to work at once on the *hors-d'œuvres*, and then the *pièces de résistance* arrived. Hundreds of pairs of men came in, each pair carrying between them a long

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

stout pole, from which hung huge pieces of red raw meat, covered with strips of red and gold cloth.

"These men stood closely together all along the tables and one on each side, so that the meat hung down from the poles over the tables just in front of the diners. The guests produced knives, and feeling the joint with their fingers to pick out a tender bit, rapidly sliced off strips of meat, which they put into their mouths, cutting off what would not go in quite close to their lips, an operation which, from personal experience, I know demands great skill if one's nose is not to suffer—as the cut is always made upwards.

"After ample libations of *tej* and *araki* (native mead, or hydromel and spirit) the diners filed out in perfect order, and the stage was cleared for the next party.

"The whole function had lasted nearly four hours and the Ras must have been heartily glad when it was over, for he had previously dined one instalment of 5000 warriors, and two more were to follow—between 17,000 and 18,000 in all partaking of the royal hospitality."

Broundo may be a nourishing form of diet tending to the development of warlike qualities, but its consumption has one serious drawback at all events, in that it is the cause of taenia (or tapeworm), a disease which is almost universal in the country. So much is this the case indeed that it is a recognized practice for all, high and low, to take monthly as a "taenicide" a dose of a plant known as *kousso*, which is so violent in its effects as to incapacitate the patient from work or occupation for the day.

Christians will not touch meat unless it is killed by

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfatā*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor [539] Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 574 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar*, is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā*," literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
Food and water, sleep and the night.

• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ǐnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat** to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara. The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to a large extent of eating from the same *ǐnjarā* basket, and the etymology of the word for "friend," *bālinjarā*, is the same as that for the English "companion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ţonin*, is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—*panem*, if not *circenses*. The stature of a big man depends partly upon the number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christianity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is eulogized at times by parading his *ǐnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he prepares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal association, and holds an annual feast (*zǐkr*) in which food is distributed to the poor.

Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of

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* *Wat* is the sauce in which the *Injarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 571 264 181 [829] A similar spirit is observed in Amhara commensality. Meals are customarily eaten from a common *ĭnjarā* basket. The sauce is ladled onto the center of the *ĭnjarā*, and is consumed ensemble by those sitting around the basket as they dip into it with pieces of *ĭnjarā* broken off from the edges. Traditional Amhara scoff at what they regard as the excessively individualistic Western custom of sitting each person down to a separate place at the table and thus depriving the meal hour of what they feel should be its basically communal tone.

*121 574 571 181 At a more formal level of interaction this disposition is expressed in the form of *hospitality*. Amhara hospitality is luxuriously attentive and thoughtful. For example, if there is foreknowledge of a guest's arrival, he is awaited at some distance from his destination and escorted with much to-do into the home. His mule is at once unsaddled and given to feed. The guest is given a place of honor in the home, and a glass of *ṭallā* is immediately brought for him. Amhara etiquette prescribes, moreover, that a glass is not properly filled unless it overflows; and it is repeatedly filled to overflowing whenever the guest has drunk some portion of the beverage. As a gratuitous gesture of good faith, the host—or his wife, or servant—tastes some of the beverage first, a sign that no "medicine" has been added. Before long the wicker table is produced, and the guest and his party are served copiously—no matter what time of day they arrive (unless, of course, it is a fasting day). When the guest has eaten to satisfaction, the host will insist that he eat some more, by repeatedly issuing injunctions like *tegābazu* ("Help yourselves!"), *mokar* ("Try!"), or *āfar sehon* ("If I become dust!"—i.e., "If you do not eat you will be condemning me to death"). The Amhara host is also likely to insist that his guest spend the night. The guest's feet will be washed, and the host's bed will be given to him, or long grass will be cut for bedding on the floor. At the time of farewell, the host and his attendants follow the guest and his party a good distance along the road. The guest continually cries, "Return! Return!" and the host agrees but continues to serve as escort.

Such hospitality is not wantonly bestowed upon the casual wayfarer. Normally it is reserved for those who qualify as worthy guests: relatives, friends, [609] or persons of high rank. Nonetheless, there does exist among the Amhara some feeling that even the unknown stranger should be shown hospitality, for he is *ya-egziābhēr engedā* ("a guest of God"). Travelers are generally assured [485] that somebody somewhere will show them hospitality; there are no inns in traditional Ethiopia, for it is considered wrong to exchange food and lodging for money.

*121 576 571 181 Related to this pattern of hospitality is a delicate sense of *respect* that the Amhara displays toward all comers; often, even toward his enemies. When two Amhara pass each other anywhere, they are expected to bow slightly and say: "How did you pass the night?" or "How did you spend the day?" If they